

# Washington State Progressive Caucus Questionnaire

<https://waprogressives.org/endorsements>

**Explanatory Note:** Our endorsements (and sometimes donations) are generally made to people running for the state legislature, municipal and county offices, public utility commissioners, etc. If you are running for such an office, you may wonder why we are asking questions about state-wide or national issues. The reason is that local officeholders are tomorrow's senators, representatives and governors. Even if you have nothing of the sort in mind now, you may easily feel differently in a few years. We want to put people into the pipeline from, as Howard Dean once put it, "the Democratic wing of the party," We are old fashioned enough to think that the New Deal and the Great Society were good ideas; and modern enough to be up to speed on all the latest organizing methods and apps. If you have reservations about answering any of these questions, please explain why.

**Candidate Name: Elizabeth (E.J.) Zita**

**Position Sought: Port Commissioner, District 3, Port of Olympia**

**Campaign Manager: Zena Hartung & Deb Jacqua**

**Consultant: Logan Reed**

**Campaign Email: [zitaport@gmail.com](mailto:zitaport@gmail.com), [zhartung@gmail.com](mailto:zhartung@gmail.com)**

**Campaign Phone: [360-951-8445](tel:360-951-8445)**

**Website: [www.reElectZitaForPort.com](http://www.reElectZitaForPort.com)**

**Campaign Address: 120 State Ave. NE # 243, Olympia WA 98501**

**Do you request the endorsement of the Progressive Caucus? YES**

## Labor

Do you support raising the minimum wage in your local jurisdiction if state and federal action continues to be stalled? To what level?

*YES - \$15 to start*

## Education

What is your opinion of high stakes testing? How would you change the way students and teachers are evaluated?

*High stakes testing is counterproductive. Evaluate students more holistically, as we do at The Evergreen St. College, where I have taught over 20 years – and more efficiently. Evaluation should serve as a tool for providing targeted educational resources to students and schools that need them.*

## Environment

What can be accomplished at the local level to promote development of alternative energy and prevent privatization of natural resources?

*Support state incentives for renewable energy, Form public-private partnerships for funding and planning for renewable energy – from federal and state resources including Dept. of Commerce, Bonneville Energy Foundation, Partners for Rural Washington, TransAlta, utilities, and Ports, which have an infrastructure mission. Community Solar is an opportunity for people to make modest investments in solar installations at e.g. schools, and reap incentives.*

## Finance/Taxation

What will you do to support public banking at the local level?

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*THINK network (Thurston Investment NetworK) is an example of local funding for local projects.*

## Health Care/Retirement

Explain your position (for or against) Medicare for All (aka single payer health care) in terms of the effect on local citizens, service providers, and government.

*The ACA (Affordable Care Act) is a good first step, and must be expanded with a single payer health care system. **Every resident** (citizen or not) deserves affordable health care regardless of pre-existing conditions. **Service providers** need a uniform system so they can simply order the care that patients need, and not have to fight with insurance companies that cut corners, deny tests, or deny necessary medications. (My lesbian spouse has operated a health clinic for over 20 years; she is one of few in the community who accepts patients regardless of insurance, subsidizing their costs thanks to patients who can pay.) **Government will benefit** from a single payer system when people can get the preventative and primary care they need in time, in appropriate settings, and not have to rely on the ER. The current system is expensive, inefficient, and inhumane.*

## Security/Public Safety

How would you act to stop the militarization of local police forces and establish civilian oversight of law enforcement?

*When our peaceful antiwar protest was broken up violently in 2003, I filed a police brutality report and worked with other community activists for a community oversight board of our local PD, for nearly 2 years. The investigation seemed hopeful but nothing came of it in the end – and my cop ended up killing an unarmed brown man a few years later (he is off the force now). Our PD has made improvements, but more progress is necessary.  
Change state law so that police cannot shoot simply out of fear.  
All law enforcement wear working body cameras all the time.  
More training, in de-escalation, communication, and dealing with mental illness.*

## General

Do you consider yourself a Democrat? Do you consider yourself a progressive? Why?

*My parents were Nixon Republicans. I've been a progressive Democrat since before I could vote, before I came out as lesbian. Because – social justice and environmental stewardship.*

What parts, if any, of the [Washington State Democratic Party Platform](#) (← click link to view) do you disagree with? Why?

*I read it all and I agree with it all. We had some pretty lively discussions about it at the precinct caucus last year. I was a Bernie alternate.*

If this is not your first election, what other offices have you run for? If it is your first campaign, what other campaigns (candidate or issue) have you participated in? What did you learn from those campaigns?

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*This is my second run. I am the incumbent Port Commissioner, running for re-election in District 3, Port of Olympia. This is a county wide seat. I learned that I have to ask for money, as much as I hate that, and I have to doorbell, even though I am disabled.*

*We won the first time as complete unknowns, with almost no money, against status quo opponents with name recognition and big money. Because the people wanted change.*

*This time we know more about messaging, fundraising, and organization – and we are working closely with another progressive Port candidate – Bill Fishburn in District 2.  
Zita and Fishburn, Port for the People.*

*We both have big money, status quo against us, and the grass root with us. We will need to*

- Get the message out – money for media*
- Get the vote out – targeted phone calling and doorbelling*
- Counter lies, vandalism, and PDC attacks – those are awful in Thurston County now*

Have you ever been a precinct committee officer or held other Democratic organization offices?

*Bernie alternate in my precinct last year.*

What single issue is the most important motivator for your run for office? What proposals do you have for dealing with it?

*Transparency and integrity. No more decisions behind closed doors. Public collaboration for all planning at the Port. I got some policies changed in my first year, and have more ready.*

*The recent WA St. Supreme Court decision on the Open Public Meetings act is a powerful weapon against Port secrecy, and making deals that are good for their friends but bad for the public. They ruled against the Port of Vancouver's oil terminal, and require all Ports to be more transparent now. Beautiful.*

Are there also important secondary issues? Describe your approach to implementing solutions?

*Issues: Social justice, environmental stewardship, and fiducial responsibility.*

*Approach: listening, information, collaboration, openness, respect, planning for the future.*

*Climate change and social justice – stop shipping fracking proppants to Standing Rock. Transition to renewable energy. Solar and wind are good business, providing good jobs for the present and future. I make coalition with local activists, politicians, and business people to plan projects and get grants.*

*Energy- solarizing Evergreen (where I teach) – training students in energy physics, sustainability, project planning, grantwriting – students took the lead working with Facilities, we partnered with Bonneville Energy, and are putting solar on our Tacoma campus. Community solar – group centered in Tenino got solar on schools – now we are strategizing on expanding solar in the community. Port can provide seed money to small cities like Tenino. Port funded EV charging stations and a free bike fleet in another small town.*

*Agriculture – I chair our county agriculture committee and advocate for protection of working lands and open space. Port funded staff work by our local Economic Development Council and Ag Extension Office to study ag needs and write grants for projects for local food producers. Public-private partnerships*

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*Sea level rise – Collaborate with the City of Olympia, which has done good studies and is taking the lead. Port needs a new Master Plan before new projects on vulnerable areas such as the Marine Terminal. Planning must actively collaborate with the public, using professional services to get engaged public input, not merely telling the public what we plan to do. Learn from Denmark.*

*Larger scale – when Fishburn gets elected, we will have 2/3 progressives on the Port commission, and we can move a progressive agenda forward, just in time.*

If you are running in a heavily Republican area, do you have a reasonable chance at winning? If not, how do you plan to use your candidacy to build ongoing connections among local people who share progressive values?

*Olympia is very progressive. If we get the vote out in the urban areas, we have an excellent chance again. Remember that we won as underfunded unknowns against a powerful status quo, 2 years ago. Disappointed Bernie supporters have taken over the local Democrats recently, so they are engaged and empowered now.*

*South Thurston County is conservative, and they elected Trump supporters for county commissioners last year. Being a beef rancher in south county connects me to this constituency.*